

### Standing up for the social work profession



I enjoyed attending the BASW AGM and Conference last month, spending time on our stall and meeting with members. This is important as the success of the union is based on listening to members and being genuinely

interested in member engagement. I was pleased to hear about the impact our successful campaign fund is having as we reach out and support member led campaigns. At the BASW Conference I was pleased to sign the BASW / SWU Co-operation agreement which once more formalises the relationship between Professional Association and Specialist Trade Union.

BASW and SWU aspire to co-extensive memberships, benefiting from the full comprehensive service provision available from SWU and BASW's complementary membership services. In recognition of the close association between BASW and SWU, SWU is an organisational member of BASW.

The union continues to grow in strength and from all at SWU and the SWU Executive your ongoing support is important. As a SWU member, you will know that Employment Representation from a Qualified Social Worker who knows the profession inside and out is important. The Trade Union  
A&R Team

are at the forefront of this organisations and if you ever need their services then you can be assured of professionalism from a service from social workers who understand the profession. In addition, SWU remains active with BASW, the Austerity Action Group, General Federation of Trade Unions and the SWU Campaign Fund - promoting activism and there are always opportunities to be involved with the union though being a Union Contact in the workplace.



**John McGowan and BASW Chair Julia Ross signing the SWU / BASW co-operation agreement**

The planning for the SWU AGM is starting now and this will be a virtual AGM. Further details will be emailed to members late August on how you can access the AGM and joining instructions.

The SWU Assignment Competition has been successful once more and the entries were all high quality. The judges will be busy with reading and trying to come up with the winning 4 entries. On my initial read this will be a difficult task.

Specialist unions like SWU are the right way to stand up for the Social Work profession; particularly as the big unions and the leadership of some of the major unions are dealing with hundreds of different professions. Therefore, just how much time are the big unions speaking about Social Work? The more specialised you are, the easier it is to campaign on a clear message as is the case with our new campaigns which are having a real impact.

### ***Why consider membership of the Social Workers Union? Uniqueness of SWU - a union run by social workers***

There are four compelling reasons to do so. **Firstly**, union membership is an important act of solidarity with all our colleagues. There is strength in unity. **Secondly**, this is a time of great political flux which in itself presents both significant challenges and opportunities for social workers. In such a climate, it is crucial that the collective voice of social workers is heard loud and clear. By joining the

Social Workers Union, you will help add weight to our voice at this critical juncture. **Thirdly**, more recently, there has been a welcome re-awakening of that 'political' piece of the social work DNA manifesting itself in a renewed concern around the whole concept of social action. **Finally**, the Employment Representation is guaranteed from an A&R Trade Union Officer who understands the social work profession inside and out.

*Hope you all have a lovely summer and enjoy this edition of the newsletter.*

**John McGowan**  
**General Secretary**  
j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

## FORMAL NOTICE

# SWU 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**FRIDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2023**

**The 2023 Annual General Meeting of the Social Workers Union will be held online and joining instructions can be found at [www.swu-union.org.uk](http://www.swu-union.org.uk)**

As per SWU rules, the SWU Executive shall have power to make and provide a provision for an AGM meetings to be held using electronic means, and to provide for electronic communication for members, including facilitating provision for members to vote and speak by appropriate electronic means.

### THE TIMETABLE IS AS FOLLOWS:

<b>3-8-2023</b>	Deadline for receipt of motions
<b>7-9-2023</b>	Notice of any proposed amendment to rules given in writing to members
<b>14-9-2023</b>	Deadline for amendments to motions

Motions must be signed by 10 members and submitted to the Executive Committee by the above date.

Amendments to motions must also be signed by 10 members.

**Please visit [www.swu-union.org.uk](http://www.swu-union.org.uk) to register your attendance.**  
**Entry to this event is FREE for SWU Members.**

We are always willing to assist union members with the drafting of motions. Please send an email to [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk) for such assistance. Motions should be submitted by email to [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk)

**Membership numbers must be stated and will be checked.**

The Social Workers Union, Wellesley House,  
37 Waterloo Road, Birmingham B2 5PP  
[www.swu-union.org.uk](http://www.swu-union.org.uk)

**SWU** Social Workers Union

# SWU event outlines how social workers can seek help from press regulator

In the fast-paced world of journalism, adhering to regulation is an important part of upholding standards and accountability

This is where regulation plays a significant role - in upholding editorial standards and protecting individual rights. In a [poll by Community Care magazine](#), 77% of readers said that negative coverage of the social work profession affected them.

At an event organised by the Social Workers Union, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), which regulates most newspapers and magazines, as well as digital news content, outlined how it operates and how social workers can seek its support and protection.

To ensure that publications stay up to date with the standards and regulations, IPSO requires member publications to submit annual reports of compliance. These reports provide valuable insights into the types of complaints publications receive, the training issues they address, and the evolving landscape of journalism.

These reports help IPSO gauge the industry's progress and identify areas that require attention.

## Supporting the public and protecting individual rights

At the core of IPSO's work lies the mission to support the public and protect individual rights. It does this through upholding editorial standards, collaborating with expert organisations, providing guidance to editors and journalists, operating a [24-hour anti-harassment hotline](#), and investigating and mediating complaints.

Upholding editorial standards is a crucial part of IPSO's work. Through its standards team, IPSO ensures that member publications adhere to the [Editors' Code of Practice](#), which consists of 16 clauses covering various topics. These clauses include accuracy, harassment, confidential sources, and more. IPSO expects member publications not only to comply with the letter of the code but also embrace its spirit.



## Beyond print media

IPSO's regulations extend beyond traditional print media. They also cover online journalism, including websites and social media accounts associated with member publications. This recognition of the digital landscape emphasises the importance of maintaining high standards and accountability across all journalistic platforms.

However, this does not mean that all media is covered. Therefore as part of the SWU Campaign Fund activity on the media portrayal of social workers, SWU has also [met the National Union of Journalists, launched guidance with the other press regulator IMPRESS](#) and will be shortly writing to Ofcom and other broadcast media representatives.

The rise of social media and the ease of self-publishing has also led to challenges in the media landscape. IPSO acknowledges that anyone with a smartphone can label themselves a journalist. This reality highlights the need to differentiate between various forms of journalism and cultivate media literacy to promote trusted sources of information.

Sadly, this means that while IPSO regulates publications, it does not have jurisdiction over vigilante individuals who create websites or domains to harass and invade the privacy of social workers or other professionals. In such cases, IPSO advises affected individuals to contact the police.

## Editors' Code of Practice

At the heart of the protection IPSO can offer is the Editors' Code of Practice which comprises several important clauses that guide journalistic conduct. Of most importance to social workers are Clause 1 Accuracy (which addresses factual accuracy in articles, pictures, and comment pieces), Clause 2 Privacy (covering the intrusion into someone's private life without consent), Clause 3 Harassment and Clause 6 Children (and the importance of protecting minors' privacy and welfare).

Any breaches of the [IPSO Editors' Code of Practice should be reported to IPSO](#), who are also there to offer advice and guidance. Where coverage contravenes the [SWU guidelines on media reporting](#), social workers can also report this to [campaigns@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@swu-union.org.uk) so that the Union is aware of the incident and can build it into its ongoing campaigning in this area.

**You can access the IPSO slideshow from the event hosted by SWU on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 on our website: <https://swu-union.org.uk/2023/06/swu-event-outlines-how-social-workers-can-seek-help-from-press-regulator>**

## Social Media

If you have not done so then please follow us on Social Media - we post and tweet regular updates about the work and developments of the Social Workers Union.

### Monthly Newsletter

Monthly newsletters are emailed to all SWU members. If you are not receiving this then please check what email address we have. The newsletters are also published on the web site.

### SWU can be found on the following:

Internet: <https://swu-union.org.uk>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/SWU\\_UK](https://twitter.com/SWU_UK)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/](http://www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@socialworkersunion>

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/socialworkersunion](http://www.instagram.com/socialworkersunion)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/social-workers-union>

# Pledge of Pride: co-creating practice resources to improve support for LGBTQ+ care leavers

## Pledge of Pride

### A guide for supporting LGBTQ+ care leavers

April 2023



In April 2023, Teesside University and the LGBTQ+ Youth in Care Network launched their new resource, [“Pledge of Pride: A Guide for Supporting LGBTQ+ Care Leavers”](https://www.lgbtyouthincare.com/leaving-care-with-pride) (link: <https://www.lgbtyouthincare.com/leaving-care-with-pride>).

This resource is the outcome of the collaborative “Leaving Care With Pride” research project, which also includes a research briefing titled “Exploring the Experiences of LGBTQ+ Care Leavers”.

The project aimed to address the lack of knowledge surrounding the unique challenges faced by UK lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) care leavers, considering factors such as gender, sexual orientation, and care experiences. The research was conducted collaboratively, involving three young researchers with lived experiences as LGBTQ+ individuals who left care in the UK, as well as a fostering engagement manager. Led by senior lecturer Dr Claire Brown at Teesside University, the team ensured the research questions were carefully crafted and the findings were used to design a toolkit for professionals to enhance services for LGBTQ+ care leavers.

*“LGBT rights have never been more important and support for the community is needed, particularly for young people in care and care leavers.” - Jack, Pledge of Pride research team*

### Understanding the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ care leavers

Although there is a growing knowledge base on the experiences of care leavers and LGBTQ+ people generally, little is known about the specific challenges encountered by young LGBTQ+ people as they prepare to leave care. This marginalised group is likely to face multiple forms of social exclusion (Government Equalities Office, 2018).

Our research indicates that trans young people experience numerous issues related to their gender and sexual identity, both within the care system and during the transition out of care in the UK. While some examples of good practice exist, the provision of effective support for LGBTQ+ care leavers remains inadequate.

Professionals report a lack of consistent training, policies, and organisational support to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ+ young people preparing to leave care. As a result, there is a notable inconsistency in professionals' readiness to support LGBTQ+ individuals leaving care. This inconsistency adversely affects crucial aspects of young people's lives, such as housing, finance, education, emotional well-being, and mental and physical health. Young people often feel ignored, invalidated, and encounter instances of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

Emerging research suggests that professionals in children's social work in the UK are failing to adequately meet the needs of trans service users, as documented by Hudson-Sharp (2018) and Brown (2021). Although the UK, along with many other countries, has witnessed significant legal, political, and social transformation in LGBTQ+ rights in recent decades, rights for trans and non-binary individuals have lagged behind.

Our findings indicate that trans and non-binary young people may face an exceptionally high risk of rejection from caregivers, resulting in a lack of support during their transition into adulthood. Without emotional, financial, and practical assistance, these young people are set up to fail in their journey toward independence, potentially lacking adequate access to food, accommodation, and mental health support.

### **Addressing discrimination and inadequate substitute care**

Discriminatory attitudes and interactions have been reported in relation to various professionals, including social workers, foster carers, and residential home staff. This demonstrates the failure of substitute care provisions in providing a sense of belonging and stability to young people who cannot remain with their birth families as they transition into adulthood.

Although "staying put" and "staying close" schemes aim to replicate familial support by maintaining young people's connections with former carers and residential homes, our findings suggest that these initiatives may be less effective for LGBTQ+ individuals, as they are limited to those who have positive relationships with their caregivers.

### **How can the Pledge of Pride guide help?**

The [completely free resource](#) offers recommendations that can be utilised within local services or during pathway planning in the following areas:

1. Health
2. Education, training, and employment
3. Identity and emotional well-being
4. Family and social networks
5. Money and practical skills
6. Housing

It is acknowledged that professionals may lack awareness and understanding of LGBTQ+ specific health issues, such as access to puberty blockers, safe binding practices, name and pronoun changes, and addressing LGBTQ+ phobia in different environments. Even commonplace social care practices, like confidentiality, can be misinterpreted and result in the inappropriate outing of LGBTQ+ individuals without their consent.

*"As a transgender, care-experienced person, it feels alienating and horrible to be targeted in the media for simply being myself. Please ensure that you question everything you encounter in the media about us."*

- LGBTQ+ care leaver

The resource provides information about existing networks that support LGBTQ+ young people and directs organisations to access training opportunities to enhance their own support for LGBTQ+ individuals. Additionally, the resource includes

LGBTQ+ and Trans inclusion statements that organisations can use as a starting point to develop their own local policies. Finally, an LGBTQ+ individual with care experience shares their advice, including strategies for managing personal beliefs that may differ from a young person's identity.

**Blog by Claire, Charlotte, Jack, Zari and Brett**

You may also be interested in reading about the new Skills for Care learning framework to [Deliver Affirmative Care to LGBTQ+ People in Later Life](#), a [guest blog by TransActual on supporting transgender young people](#), and the [SWU statement in support of the transgender and non-binary community](#).

## Author biography

### **Dr Claire**

**Brown** (FHEA) is a Senior Lecturer and Course Leader at Teesside University. Claire sits on the Editorial Board for two journals, chairs the TU Social Work Research Network, vice chairs TU's Gender Focus Group, is a member of the Research and Innovation and Ethics Subcommittees, JUSWA Research Subcommittee and several international EDI groups.



**Email:** [claire.brown@tees.ac.uk](mailto:claire.brown@tees.ac.uk)

**Research profile:** <https://research.tees.ac.uk/en/persons/claire-brown>



## Campaign Fund calls for bids from Wales

Social Workers are urged to find out more about how the [SWU Campaign Fund](#) could help them raise awareness of issues which they see in their work and among the vulnerable people they support



The Campaign Fund currently supports a range of activities from campaigning for more part-time social work roles through to improving bursaries for social work students in [Scotland](#) and [England](#). Previously we campaigned for students in Wales:

<https://swu-union.org.uk/2022/07/swu-campaign-fund-update-student-led-campaign-increases-financial-support-for-social-work-students-in-wales>

Campaigners working on the media code for reporting on social workers have also been busy meeting the media industry. Following support from the press regulator IMPRESS, [SWU wrote to all editors of national newspapers](#) to promote the guidance and has held meetings with the [Independent Press Standards Organisation \(IPSO\)](#) and the [National Union of Journalists](#).

**John McGowan** commented:

*"Our Campaign Fund is there for social workers to help get their voice heard. No matter how big or small the challenge, if social work professionals think that having a campaign will help address the challenges that they see every day, we are happy to receive applications for support from them."*

BASW Cymru Professional Officer **Narinder Sidhu** said:

*"It was a productive day with SWU and we welcomed learning more about the campaigns and work streams that SWU have been involved in. Some of their campaigns such as the student bursaries campaign began in Wales and have now evolved across the nations. We were keen to hear about the SWU funded Austerity Action Group which continues to grow in momentum and is a prime example of social work activism at its best."*

*"BASW Cymru will continue to strengthen our allyship with SWU in the best interest of our members. SWU offers social workers better protection, opportunities for member led initiatives/campaigns and free training too. BASW Cymru and SWU will continue to work collaboratively on our diversity and inclusion work and challenging oppression and marginalisation."*

*"I would invite our members to check whether they are members of SWU who offer our practitioners a comprehensive union cover package at a low cost. I regularly have members contact me during crisis who realised they had not joined SWU at the time of joining BASW."*

*"SWU and BASW Cymru encourage social workers and those who use services to take a stand about the issues which affect them and consider the SWU Campaign Fund. Social work is about communities and connection, if you have an idea on how you can make a positive change please get in touch."*

**Simon Francis**, founder member of [Campaign Collective](#) which has partnered with SWU to deliver the Campaign Fund, commented:

*"We have now helped over eleven groups of social workers through the Fund, but there is room for more and we would urge social workers in Wales to get in touch."*

Social workers in Wales can get in touch with the Union to discuss ideas by emailing [campaigns@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@swu-union.org.uk). More information is available at: <https://swu-union.org.uk/swu-campaign-fund>



The General Secretary of the Social Workers Union (SWU) - John McGowan and SWU Cymru Rep - Anna Collins, used a visit to Cardiff to urge social workers to take a stand about the issues which affect them.

## A SWU Union Contact is a workplace activist

Last week provided me with the opportunity of attending BASW's excellent annual conference in Birmingham. As ever, I had opportunities to speak with SWU and BASW members at our SWU stall and during conference workshops.

Several discussions centred around activism and ways in which we as social workers can incorporate activism within our roles. People spoke of using social media to share information and ideas; joining and promoting local grassroots groups; or sourcing information about national campaigns. These methods and suggestions, which are often undertaken individually and even anonymously, are great, but I would also emphasise the importance of collectivism within activism; the 'strength in numbers' and united approach; and what better way to encourage this than by becoming a SWU Union Contact within your own workplace or amongst your university cohort.

Trade union activism takes many essential forms, perhaps the most important being the sharing of information about your union and the encouraging of others to join. A SWU Union Contact is a workplace activist, contributing to the growth and development of our member-led Union, and strengthening their own knowledge and abilities in the process. It's no secret that many of our SWU team, including Executive members, Campaign leads, current and previous Chairs, and our Assistant General Secretary, all began their SWU journeys as Union Contacts, and their collective link is an enthusiasm for activism and ensuring fellow-social workers are aware of SWU's insight, understanding, and first-hand experience of the complexities of social work.

Whether it be sharing information and newsletters; encouraging colleagues' involvement; writing articles and updates; joining

research and special interest groups; promoting and developing SWU campaigns; supporting colleagues

via lower-level employment representation; joining the Executive board; or attending marches and demonstrations alongside our Austerity Action Group; there is something for everyone in the Union Contact role. There's no obligation to commit to anything more than you feel able to, and if simply sharing information is your thing, that's fine ... as well as being trade unionists we are all social workers too, and we'll support you in all aspects of the Union Contact role.



**The SWU Union Contact is an Activist within the workplace, at the heart of the social work team or university cohort, and an important link in the trade union chain.**

For further information about becoming a SWU Union Contact including the induction and training process, or if you have any questions, please do drop me a line.

***(All SWU Union Contacts - including those yet to complete induction - are eligible to join our free Training & Development event in Manchester on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. If you haven't already confirmed your attendance, please email me for details).***

*In solidarity.*

**Carol Reid  
National Organiser &  
Union Contact Manager  
[carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk)**



## Whatever legal help you need, we're there for you.

We are friendly, professional and affordable. And we work across the Trade Union movement.

In addition to our **free personal injury service**, SWU members receive **exclusive benefits** including:

- ▶ **10%** discount for wills and probate services
- ▶ **10%** discount for residential conveyancing and commercial property services
- ▶ **10%** discount for family and matrimonial law services
- ▶ **10%** discount for criminal/motoring offences and court litigation services

Visit [morrishsolicitors.com/socialworkersunion](https://morrishsolicitors.com/socialworkersunion) to find out more  
or call **033 3344 9600**



## We are delighted to announce that the SWU Executive have agreed to the continued funding of the SWU Campaign Fund

The Social Workers Union Campaign Fund was launched in September 2021 to assist members to develop and help run campaigns throughout 2021/22. It was extended, with additional funding, for a further year to run through 2022/23.

Since its inception, the Fund has delivered a significant positive contribution to social workers, such as progress on improving student bursaries, standing up for social workers against poor media coverage and promoting better working conditions as well as calling out issues which social workers, and the vulnerable groups they work with, often experience.

A dedicated page on the SWU website carries information about the latest news from activity delivered through the Campaign Fund: <https://swu-union.org.uk/swu-campaign-fund/>

### Activity 2022/23

**Media portrayal** of social workers was raised as a concern and a new code of conduct for the media was drafted and agreed in principle with one of the media regulators, IMPRESS, during 2021/22. Funding for 2022/23 has enabled this campaign to continue. A positive working relationship with the other press regulator, IPSO, has been established and a rapid reporting mechanism for social workers to highlight concerns has been established and publicised. In addition, a constructive meeting was held with the National Union of Journalists who are exploring promoting

the code through their internal communications channels, through their educators network and with backing of its Ethics Council. Activity to work with Ofcom and BECTU on broadcast journalists is planned for summer 2023.

**Neurodiverse** social workers have been further assisted with advice on how to achieve recognition. A working group has been launched which will draft a pledge to encourage and support employers in celebrating ND social workers. This will be launched formally in summer / autumn 2023.

**Part-time work** options for social workers have been promoted via research into the lack of job adverts for part time SW posts. The original news story in 2022 was picked up in the media and SWU followed up by writing to employers' organisations about the issues highlighted in the research which led to supportive comments from these groups. [We have launched updated research](#) which shows that progress has been made, but more needs to be done. This will be followed up again with briefings for employers' groups.

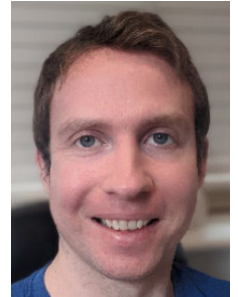
**Social workers were supported** to put on a webinar about how to take the first steps to change an employers' working conditions in autumn 2022. Around 50 people attended live with another 150 watching the [video on-demand later](#).

**Scottish students** had examined the need for reform of the bursary schemes in Scotland and the need for parity in funding with other front-line services' students (e.g. nurses and

## Frontline has failed. And their new contract proves it:

SWU members Joe Hanley and Robin Sen share their thoughts on the new Frontline contract

In May 2023 the social work qualifying scheme Frontline had their core qualifying contract renewed by the Department for Education once again. Notably though, this contract is not on Frontline's usual terms. It contains a number of new provisions that are designed to address issues with Frontline's record over the past ten years. Significantly, these are the same issues that many in the profession warned about when Frontline was proposed, and the inclusion of these new contractual terms is a tacit admission from the Department for Education that many of the criticisms made of the programme were well founded.



Start to delve into any level of detail and Frontline's failures are striking. Just as one example, one of Frontline's foundational premises was that it would help address the large vacancy rates in child and family social work, but since it began these rates have more than doubled. However, it is one thing for long-time critics of Frontline like us to highlight this, it is quite another for the Department for Education and Frontline to sign a new contract that acknowledges as much.



To explain further, here are some of the provisions in the new contract, and how they relate to failings of Frontline and the fast-track model.

### Payment by Results

The new contract introduces tougher targets around recruitment, completion and post-qualifying retention, and also introduces payment by results. These changes can be seen as a response to Frontline's poor track record related to recruitment, completion and retention, and the performance related payments provide some financial protection against continued failures in these areas.

### Delayed Masters

The new contract requires the Masters' component of Frontline to be delivered following the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), not alongside it as it has up to now. This is in response to the challenges Frontline graduates have faced undertaking this alongside the ASYE, and the poor completion rates that resulted. This also has the ironic impact of making Frontline, initially sold as a "fast-track" route, a slower route than most postgraduate university social work routes in allowing candidates to gain their Masters' qualification!

### Lowering Entry Criteria

Frontline was launched based on a promise to recruit the "best and the brightest" into the profession, with a particular focus on Oxbridge graduates. However, since it was founded it has had to habitually lower its entry criteria. This most recent contract specifically allows for the minimum entry criteria of a 2:2, in line with most social work post-qualifying programmes. While it is good to see Frontline gradually setting aside some of the elitism on which they were founded, this is more likely to be driven by increasing failures by Frontline to fill their cohorts, and you will not see any overt recognition from Frontline's senior management that their original framing was misguided and inconsistent with the values of the profession.

## Increasing cohort/unit size

Despite Frontline increasingly struggling to fill their cohorts, this new contract increases the maximum cohort size to 500 participants per year. The current Children's Minister Claire Coutinho describes this as a "key part of our investment in the sector" at a time when child and family social worker vacancy rates sit around 20 percent. Increasing Frontline cohort sizes can be seen as an attempt to address these vacancy rates from a government that is depressingly lacking in new ideas, and seems to want to keep everything relatively quiet on the social work front until the next election. It also stands in contrast to the assurances from Frontline founder, and now Labour candidate for the Copeland seat in the next general election, Josh MacAlister. In 2018 MacAlister stated Frontline would not seek to expand beyond 450 participants per cohort.

## Learning and Practice Hubs

To accommodate the larger cohort, Frontline will be increasing the size of the practice units in which their participants are based, renaming these "learning and practice hubs". Notably this insular unit model has been shown to have led to Frontline participants feeling ill-prepared for the realities of practice, and is based on the Reclaiming Social Work model, that itself has faded into obscurity with little recognition of its failures.

## Diversity Targets

Frontline has had an overall poor track record in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. Likely in recognition of this, the new contract for Frontline includes a range of provisions such as ensuring their marketing appeals to "diverse communities" and that "appropriate support" is provided to encouraged applications from under-represented groups.

## Residentials

Frontline are also finally giving up the residential component of their programme that has long been argued to exclude those with caring responsibilities, among others. This may be seen as a welcome tacit acknowledgement of the indirectly discriminatory nature of such a residential component. However, it should also be recalled that this feature of the Frontline training programme has been allowed to continue for a decade in a profession that prides itself on its commitment to social justice.

## Conclusion

These failures are, notably, still not acknowledged overtly by Frontline senior management, its proponents and backers (who continue to include a number of ethically suspect, highly capitalised, global financial corporations). When the new Frontline contract with these changes was announced, CEO Mary Jackson dismissed Frontline's critics by stating "I guess I feel that anything new is going to get a bit of flak".

However, Frontline is now abandoning many of the core selling points on which its foundation was based, while also failing to evidence success in other areas such as social work retention or improving the profession's image. The question then remains as to why the Department for Education continue to maintain the egregiously large funding disparity between Frontline and mainstream routes, in particular while students on other routes are reported to be skipping meals, and making regular use of food and warm banks.

Maybe, in the government's eyes, Frontline have simply become too big to fail. Others, like ourselves, look at its record and wonder how it is allowed to continue.

**Joe Hanley, Lecturer in Social Work, Open University**  
**Robin Sen, Lecturer in Social Work, University of Edinburgh**

# Social Work Leadership: Top down / Grassroots up

SWU's Assistant General Secretary, Calum Gallacher, was invited to give a presentation at last month's BASW conference

What a privilege to sit alongside and listen to such an experienced cohort of social workers at the BASW conference. The plenary began with Professor Robin Miller (School of Social Policy, Birmingham University) who spoke about the nature of social work being more than an administrative function, his current involvement in research and discourse across our 4 UK nations, bringing context to strategic developments seeking to improve leadership cultures and working conditions in social work. Maura Dargan (Executive Director of Social Work, Northern Trust, Northern Ireland) gave examples of the challenges of integrated leadership for social workers and acknowledged the disproportionate balance of health colleagues in senior positions. However, Maura emphasised the inherent leadership qualities of every social worker irrespective of paygrade or hierarchical position. Tricia Pereira (Director of Operations, Skills for Care) sounded out the merits of authenticity in leaders bringing their true selves to work and including and valuing staff. Tricia concluded that to support and sustain a diverse and valued workforce we need to be compassionate leaders.

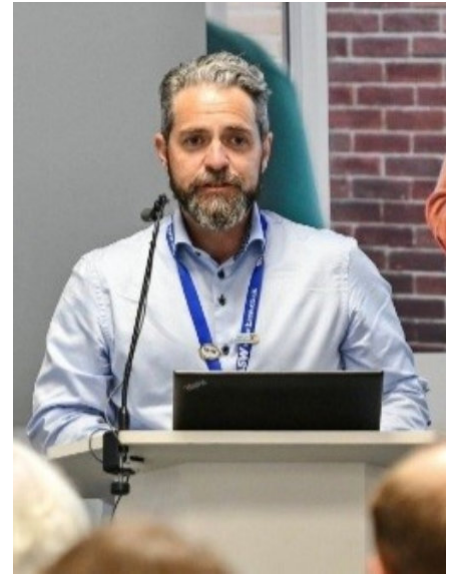
On to my presentation - my analogy of social work organisations. An evolution over several years, which combines elements of Broffenbrenners' (1977) Ecological Systems Theory and Clarke's (2020) Psychological Safety. It has become a personal conceptual framework of social work organisations and tree biodiversity. There are primary theories we learn during training and later apply in practice assessing people's needs while weighing up personal and environmental influences. We do not commonly draw on these theories contemplating the health of our workplaces.

Tree growth and strength is determined by healthy roots.

Trees rely on roots to carry nutrients from the

soil, they communicate with the tree internally and the environment around it. Leaves absorb light and CO<sub>2</sub> and in disperse the energy into the growth of new lower branches. If top branches become overbearing they overshadow new growth. Can a tree stand without healthy roots or continue to grow? For a period yes but ultimately it will become necrotic and collapse.

Our roots are the core values and ethics people bring into our profession - the basis of what we do, our life source, our support. Idealism and belief must continue to course through our practice from the ground up and be resonated from the top down. For too long managerialism has invaded human services and created dissonance between social work values and ethics, stifling the creativity of individuality and washing over employer health and safety duties. Social workers treated as factory workers producing conveyor belt assessments. Our skills both an art and a science treated as administrative. Professionally we manage processes but not people, we support people. As do strong leaders who inspire confidence, nurture learning and autonomy, and negotiate as they take teams forwards with them. People choose to follow leaders. To echo Tricia, the old command and control approach is out.



Organisations comprise of individual supporting life systems. The roots and the top of the tree rely on exchange of communication and nourishment to survive, develop, and evolve. No single branch can create a healthy working environment however, leaders can positively affect conditions which might attribute to better health and safety, increased job satisfaction, development, and staff retention. Can it be as simple as being kind and modelling positive behaviours?

Clark (2022) suggests by applying 4 pillars of psychological safety we can create more diverse, creative and productive and stable workforces. Inclusion safety, recognising individuality, diversity, creating a sense of belonging, value and equality for all. Learner safety, promoting equality and quality, everyone is encouraged to ask questions of policies or practices. Contributor safety enables staff at all levels to share ideas and opinions, to reflect on experiences, without fear of reprisal or ridicule - the healthiest teams report the most problems. We need open reflective cultures for shared learning and support, for leaders to show humility and to move away from their defensive rhetoric of learning culture and wellbeing washing. Lastly challenger safety, removal of hierarchical barriers of control and defensiveness which constrict our diversity of skills and experience.

Let us hope that the strength of collective consciousness in discourse at events such as the BASW conference, might be carried with social workers back to inspire their employers. Might we all inspire more organisations to develop compassionate leaders, moving the aspirational to active change, showing true commitment to improving working conditions for employee wellbeing.

**Calum Gallacher**  
**SWU Assistant General Secretary**



## Call for Nominations SWU Executive Committee Northern Ireland Representative

The Social Workers Union (SWU) is the trade union dedicated to representing the interests of social workers and the social work profession.

SWU is now seeking nominations from members to fill a vacancy on its Executive Committee.

To stand for election a candidate must meet the conditions set out in Bye Laws 1.4 and 1.5 of the SWU rules, a copy of which can be found on our website.

The Executive Committee is made up of ten members, at least two members from England, at least one member each from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (national representatives) and up to five others (UK representatives). The Chair of the union is elected by the executive from amongst the representatives.

**There is currently a vacancy for a Northern Ireland Representative.** All candidates for election must be nominated by another member of the union. In the case of the National Representative from Northern Ireland, nomination must be by a member within the relevant nation.

When attending Executive committee meetings, committee members who are either in full-time employment, self-employed or Social Work Students are entitled to claim an attendance allowance to cover costs associated with taking time off from paid work, self-employed work, caring duties or social work studies.

**SWU encourages applications from Students/ Newly Qualified Social Workers and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Social Workers who are currently under-represented on the National Executive of SWU.**

Candidates must complete a nomination form. **The closing date for receipt of nominations is Friday 21st July 2023.** The full timetable for elections and information regarding terms of office for each vacancy can be found on our website.

Completed nomination forms must be accompanied by an election statement of no more than 500 words together with a head and shoulders colour photograph in a TIFF or JPEG format. These should be sent via email to [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk). Please note that nominees need to provide full contact details including a telephone number and email address.

Nomination forms and role descriptions are available from the SWU Website or via email from [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk) (0121 389 9248).

If you have any general queries about this process, please contact the SWU Administration Manager on 0121 389 9248.

[www.swu-union.org.uk](http://www.swu-union.org.uk)



## Sluggish growth in part-time social work roles

New research by the Social Workers Union has revealed that over three-quarters of social work roles are not offered on a part-time or flexible-hours basis, although there has been a slight increase in the number of employers offering part-time working conditions since last year

Figures show that of 4,694 job adverts analysed on Total Jobs, Community Care, and The Guardian on 20 April and 18 May 2023, just under a quarter (1,059 or 23%) offered part-time or flexible hours.

Last year, an identical study found that 19% of roles offered part-time or flexible hours.

The growth in popularity for offering flexible hours has been driven by Wales, where 27% of roles are part time (up from 15% in 2022) and Northern Ireland (49% up from 37%, based on a small sample).

Scotland has slipped backwards with 29.8% of roles being part time in 2023, down from 30.5%. England posted a slight rise, up from 18.7% in 2022 to 22.6% today.

Last year the Social Workers Union (SWU) launched a [call for more part-time work opportunities to be created for social workers](#), in order to improve working conditions, provide opportunities for those who need part-time work, and improve retention of social workers.

### Support for part-time and flexible working needs to become action

**Carol Reid**, SWU National Organiser and Union Contact Manager, commented:

*“The response to our campaign has been positive with many employers’ organisations happy to hear what we had to say. It’s therefore encouraging to start to see some green shoots of progress in some areas of the country.*

*“However, with recruitment for social workers still proving challenging for employers, we now need to see this support for the aims of the campaign translate into more concerted action and more roles offered on part-time or flexible hours contracts.*

*“The growth we have seen is sluggish at best and we’re also hearing worrying reports that not all roles advertised as part-time are really suitable to part-time applicants.”*

### Part-time roles should not be treated by employers as a last resort

**One social worker from North West England** commented:

*“After months of trying, I finally got an interview which claimed it would be open to part-time hours. I put in a lot of hard work for the interview and it went really well. However, one of the managers said ‘ideally we want someone full time’ and I did not get the job.*

*“I just feel like part-time workers are at the bottom of the pecking order and brought in ‘just in case’ there was nobody suitable from the full time applicants.”*

Social workers have also reported issues when requests are made to move to part-time hours when in a role.

**Deb Solomon**, a social worker from Derbyshire and chair of the [BASW Neurodivergent Social Workers Special Interest Group](#), added:

*“We must move away from the idea that social workers going part time is a negative development or an accommodation for someone who isn’t coping. This is just not the case.*

*“Flexibility is essential to retain staff with protected characteristics and boost workforce opportunities for development. For example, some Neurodivergent staff can really benefit from part time working, and the positives can be seen in productivity, retention and wellbeing.*

*“We also need to ensure that when part-time roles are offered, this is not just a full-time role squashed into fewer days which is impossible for the post-holder to manage.”*

**John McGowan**, General Secretary of the Social Workers Union, said, *“We often hear about staffing shortages in social work and rather than seeing the number of part-time and flexible roles grow at a snail’s pace, we need to see a rapid roll out of better working conditions.”*

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) and Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) have also commented on this in the [Community Care article “Over three-quarters of social work roles not offered on part-time basis despite small rise in rate”](#).

## DATA

2022	All Social Work	FT	FT or PT	PT	Flexible	All PT or Flexible	% PT or Flexible
ALL UK	6471	5259	125	1042	45	1212	18.7%
England	5672	4616	124	886	44	1054	18.6%
Scotland	164	114	0	49	1	50	30.5%
Wales	568	485	1	82	0	83	14.6%
N. Ireland	67	44	0	25	0	25	37.3%

2023	All Social Work	FT	FT or PT	PT	Flexible	All PT or Flexible	% PT or Flexible
ALL UK	4694	3635	76	447	41	1059	22.6%
England	3208	2580	72	16	41	624	19.5%
Scotland	915	644	2	271	0	273	29.8%
Wales	534	390	0	144	0	144	27.0%
N. Ireland	37	21	2	16	0	18	48.7%

Comparison	2022	2023	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE
	% PT or Flexible	% PT or Flexible	
ALL UK	18.7%	22.6%	3.83
England	18.6%	19.5%	0.87
Scotland	30.5%	29.8%	-0.65
Wales	14.6%	27.0%	12.36
N. Ireland	37.3%	48.7%	11.34

# The (human) social worker

A social work lecturer once said to me *“you never know when someone will open up to you, tell you their story, their pain, it may happen one day and how you receive this will be as important as the act of sharing itself”*.

Those words sat with me in my social work training in a profound way and have never left me. They are what I would consider words of wisdom that remind us of empathy and how this should guide our practice.

Empathy as a universal aspect of human nature is also captured in the following quotes -

*“I think we all have empathy. We may not have enough courage to display it.”* - Maya Angelou

*“You can’t understand someone until you’ve walked a mile in their shoes.”* - Anon

*“Whenever you are about to find fault with someone, ask yourself the following question: What fault of mine most nearly resembles the one I am about to criticize?”* - Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

*“Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It’s simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of ‘You’re not alone.’”* - Brené Brown

*“Don’t criticize what you can’t understand.”* - Bob Dylan

To practice from a foundation of empathy is not always an easy course, competing demands in our social work role, personal relationships and our own growth and development add further complication. This is when supervision but most of all meaningful supervision can allow us to make sense of any value conflicts that may arise, we are after all only human.

Empathy can be linked to humility and within this humility comes humbleness, a quality in which we are truly mindful of the power dynamic

that exists in social work. The relevance to social work practice is perhaps best illustrated by Gordon Hinckley -

*“Being humble means recognising that we are not on earth to see how important we can become, but to see how much difference we can make in the lives of others.”*

So, how do I as a social work lecturer, no longer pulled by the competing demands of social work practice, finish this brief reflection - with empathy.

We all know the forces that impact upon us in practice and how these pressures can sometimes seek to influence the empathy and very purposes that led us to a social work role. It is fine to recognise this, that is the starting point, the rest is for supervision and the people that guide you or speak to you with your best interests in mind. You may find these people anywhere. Mine came here -

*“Sometimes it’s not enough to know what things mean, sometimes you have to know what things don’t mean.”* - Bob Dylan

Take care.



**Dave Callow is SWU Chair and is a qualified social worker, senior lecturer and programme lead for the MSc Social Work degree at the University of Lincoln.**

# SWU secures meeting with the Department for Education



## Department for Education

SWU Executives and staff enjoyed meeting with the Department for Education (DfE) Deputy Director and Assistant Director on May 5<sup>th</sup>. We look forward to continuing constructive discussions with the DfE around the Early Career Framework.

The DfE discussed its current support of the child and family social work workforce and ambition to bring its different programmes together to provide a national offer to the social work profession. The meeting focused on the DfE's plans to develop an Early Career Framework (ECF) with the aim to boost social worker skills, knowledge, early career support, career development, and retention. Although it is billed as a five-year framework, the DfE's aim is to provide a two-year framework that is followed by three years of support. In this ECF:

- the first two years would replace the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE),
- the ASYE assessment would be replaced by a common national assessment process in the second year,
- in years three to five social workers would choose a set of modules that count towards completions of the ECF and achieving 'Expert Practitioner' status,
- and finally social workers would complete a common national assessment process at the end of the Expert Practitioner pathway.

The DfE is looking to roll out this new framework in 2026 and is in the design and scoping phase of this ambitious project. The DfE is in consultation with local authorities and working closely with Social Work England, Ofsted, and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). The DfE has also now met with BASW and SWU to bring our voices to the table. The DfE hopes to work closely with social workers and the organisations that represent them to develop the ECF.

[As covered by Community Care in February](#), the DfE will not be introducing national pay scales and will instead work with local authorities to see how the framework fits within their pay scales. When asked what impact 'expert practitioner' status would have on pay scales, the DfE recognised that it's important for practitioners to progress within local authority pay scale.

The DfE listened to and acknowledged SWU's concerns around poor working conditions, high caseloads, burnout, and the impact of austerity. SWU emphasised the importance of ensuring that resources and structured support are available for social workers to complete these competency frameworks, which includes supportive managers and protected caseloads so that practitioners can make time for the framework within a working day. It is important that any new framework does not become another source of pressure and does not require social workers to sacrifice their own time outside of work.

SWU also discussed the broader restrictions faced by social workers that have been caused by austerity which has shut down avenues of community support including advocacy services, mental health support, and domestic violence support. The DfE acknowledged that those contextual factors are very important to recognise and take into account during the design and delivery of the framework.

The DfE has said that it would like to continue discussions with SWU and SWU is keen to engage and represent our social worker members. The DfE has also expressed interest in SWU's views on the '[Stable Homes, Built on Love](#)' children's social care reform strategy.

SWU has recently participated in the DfE's consultation on the child and family social worker workforce. SWU's response to proposals to introduce national rules on the use of agency child and family social workers in local authority children's social care can be read here: <https://swu-union.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023-05-10-SWU-DfE-consultation-response-on-child-and-family-social-worker-workforce.pdf>



**SWU** Social Workers Union

Austerity Action Group

## Order, Order, let's talk about Good Order

House of Commons  
Committee of Privileges

Matter referred on 21  
April 2022 (conduct of  
Rt Hon Boris Johnson):  
Final Report

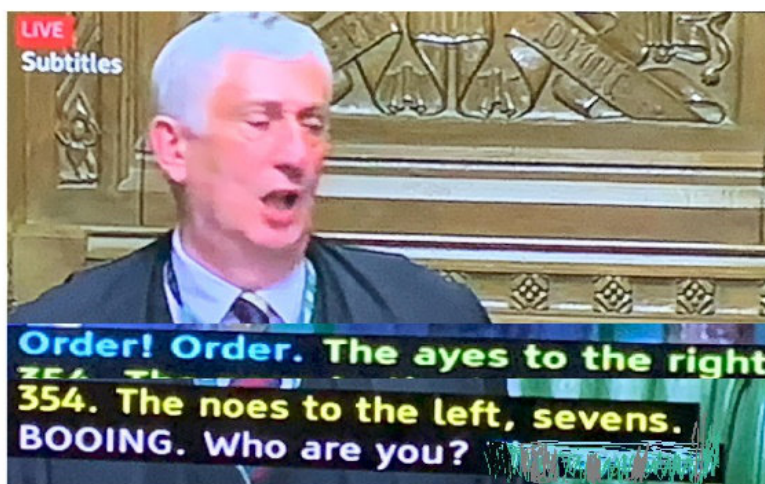
Fifth Report of Session 2022-23

19th June 2023

Division

The Commons has divided to vote  
on a motion to approve the report  
from the Committee of Privileges  
on the conduct of Boris Johnson

If I've learned and (witnessed) anything through the Tory government reign it's that 'The Truth Will Out' and to achieve it we need to always Speak Truth To Power. Both of which were achieved on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 during a 4-hour debate in the House of Commons. Members from both sides did not hold back from expressing their views on the conduct of Boris Johnson (who the week previously had resigned as an MP and then cried foul and spoke about the report which was then still embargoed)!



The majority supported the report's findings and expressed

their view accordingly - that Boris had gone beyond too far. The few who doggedly continued to praise his leadership and find fault with the system also had their say.

The salient point for me was what was not said. The Leader of the House, Penny Mordaunt, presented the report and conducted herself with decorum, as she sat, on her own, on the front bench! Meanwhile the Chair and Mother of the House, Harriet Harman, came in for a number of personal jabs by the Johnson fan club, her repost was to sit listening attentively. The final cry of one MP asking “*who are the 7 who voted against the report, and where and who were the 225 who abstained?*”

Johnson’s name will go down in history for all the wrong reasons.

Whilst there are many criticisms of our current parliament system there is much to be said about the process and the access that we have to witness it first hand.

I’m never sure whether to laugh or cry when I hear a member of the government who had previously argued that austerity measures were appropriate and proportionate suddenly announce that digital poverty is seriously impacting on a section of the population.



## Levelling Up Fund

Yes, the Minister for Levelling Up, one Michael Gove was very clear that ‘Digital Poverty’, whether through financial inability to afford access to the internet, or the skill to use smart phones and/or other devices, has a drastic impact on their daily lives. Specifically he was referring to local authorities removing the pay by cash option in car parks. He argues that the pay by cash option needs to be maintained. He’s right, and there are many more examples of where people are being excluded through no fault of their own. Statistics suggest that 20% of the population do not have access to the internet, and whilst that number remains relatively static the number of services that have gone to, or going to go, digital only continues to increase! A clear case of discrimination.

Gove has recognised that ‘Levelling Up’ is not only making sure that access to opportunities is available equally across the country but that access itself needs to be protected.

We plan to write to him and ask him how he plans to support this group of people.

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## Date for your Diary

*“Stand Up, Stand Up, for The Daniel Blakes,  
who the DWP did close its gates.  
This is the Social Workers’ Chant - Boot Out Austerity”*

Ken Loach’s 2016 film came out the year before the *Boot Out Austerity* walk, its theme epitomised the dire situation that the many vulnerable members of society were being put through - all in the name of the government’s austerity measures. ....Thus yet another name joined the long list of people whose lives (fictional and real) have



become synonymous with poverty and exclusion from the welfare system, a system that is designed to protect them!

It speaks truth to power and the names won't go away, like *Cathy Come Home* and *The Boys from The Blackstuff*. This summer sees it transferring to the stage having been adapted by David Johns the actor who played the main character.

The tour dates can be found at <https://ett.org.uk/our-work/i-daniel-blake/>

<https://ett.org.uk/our-work/i-daniel-blake/>

## Protest the Tory Party

Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 - Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023

Once again the Conservative Party will be holding its conference in Manchester on 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and once again the People's Assembly will be planning to PROTEST THE TORY PARTY with a demonstration on the Sunday.

Watch out for details of where to find *Boot Out Austerity*.



**Manchester - Protest The Tory Party  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021**

**Angi Naylor  
SWU Vice Chair and  
Austerity Action Group Chair**



## Labour urged to include social work in Manifesto plans

The Labour Party leadership has been urged to look again at its plans for Government after it was revealed that social workers do not get a single mention in the 86-page [“National Policy Forum”](#) report

The profession also received just a handful of references in a 64-page [Fabian Society blueprint](#) for a National Care Service, which [was requested](#) by Shadow Health Secretary **Wes Streeting MP**.

Social work leaders had [previously written](#) to Wes Streeting, Shadow Education Secretary **Bridget Phillipson MP** and National Policy Forum Chair **Anneliese Dodds MP**, urging them to include reform of social work bursaries for students in the manifesto.

Students on social work courses are required to complete front-line work as part of their courses, helping the most vulnerable in society. This means many social work students face unique levels of financial hardship as they are unable to work part-time while completing their studies.

Despite this, student bursaries for social workers in England are currently distributed unequally, the funding for them has been cut in real terms and numbers have been capped at the same numbers (1,500 postgraduate and 2,500 undergraduate) since 2013. Over 350 students have signed [an open letter to the Secretaries of State for Health and Education](#) calling for reform to social work bursary programmes in England so far.

In a follow up letter requesting a meeting with politicians, the Social Workers Union also asked shadow ministers to think again about the omission of social workers from the manifesto.

In the letter, SWU General Secretary **John McGowan** writes “we were also

*disappointed not to see a single mention of the vital role social workers play in the [National Policy Forum Final Year Policy Documents](#). We would urge party policy makers to address this situation.”*

The letter suggests several amendments to the policy documents which are also supported by the Labour Social Work Group.

Members of the Labour Social Work Group, working through their Constituency Labour Parties, have expressed similar concerns, especially with respect to the crisis in bursaries and to the lack of mention of the role of Local Authority social workers in the proposed National Care Service roadmap.

### Proposed amendments:

- p27, line 9: “We will start by establishing a new Fair Pay Agreement in the adult **and children’s** social care sectors.”
- p57, line 6: “our priority will be that care workers, **and social workers employed in Adult Social Care**, receive the pay, the conditions and the training they need to provide great care and to stay working in the sector.”
- p57, line 28: “will address issues in the social care workforce, **including the crisis in recruiting and retaining qualified social workers...**”
- p61, line 26: to add “Labour will reform this broken system, **to include fair student bursaries on key courses which include in-work frontline placements such as social work**, ensuring...”

# SASW and SWU Statement: Social Work Pay Levels and Working Conditions

Members have been contacting SASW (the Scottish Association of Social Work) and SWU (the Social Workers Union) with concerns that pay levels and working conditions for social workers are falling behind other public service professionals



**"SWU and SASW will work with our members and colleagues in professional bodies, other unions, and affiliates, to accomplish sustainable changes which go beyond pay and help create a working environment that not is only effective in supporting our citizens, but offers a healthy and sustainable career."**

**Alison Bavidge**  
National Director, SASW

**John McGowan**  
General Secretary, SWU



Over the last 5 years the SWU, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), and Bath Spa University social work surveys evidence growing dissatisfaction with working conditions citing high caseloads, unmanageable pressures, limited control, lack of support, and burdening bureaucracy as drivers for burnout and exodus. In March 2023, Dr Jermaine Ravalier noted that this year past is the first time during the study that social workers have brought up pay as a contentious issue. <sup>1 & 2</sup>

In the surveys, social workers report an increasing feeling of lack of recognition in the vital role they play in the lives of people who are struggling because of their circumstances. This increases their concern that this, and the negative public perceptions of social work, are being reinforced in pay gaps in comparison to other professionals. For example, teachers have received a 14.6% pay increase taking their starting salaries to £38,650.<sup>3</sup> NHS staff in Scotland got an average 7% (5.4 - 11.3% across all bands) in 22-23 and 6.5% for 23-24.<sup>3</sup> Junior Doctors have now been offered a 14.5% pay award, a government investment of £61.3 million, said to be the biggest in 20 years and matches the award accepted by nurses and other NHS staff.<sup>4</sup>

This disparity appears to be happening without reference to or full understanding of social work responsibilities, and the complexity of the decision-making that can have life changing impact on individuals and families. While we stand in solidarity with teachers and other public sector colleagues, feelings of frustration for social workers are valid.

## Complexities of industrial action

The news is currently full of stories about pay negotiations between the Scottish Government, Trade Unions and employers, union ballots, and in some sectors industrial action. Striking can be a divisive mechanism for staff groups and trade unions. It can also be an opportunity for employers and the government to play unions off against each other to the detriment of workers. This has been evident in England where a majority of 14 unions agreed to accept a pay deal whilst RCN and Unite rejected it. Such splits can be highly problematic for workers and employers.<sup>5</sup>

The UK Government continues to take measures to limit the impact of strikes by bringing in the Anti-Strike Bill to minimise the impact of strike action in bargaining. SWU and SASW/BASW will continue to oppose such measures.

SWU General Secretary John McGowan has regularly reassured social workers that SWU is keenly aware of the high level of frustration among social workers and the increasing pressures that everyone in the social work profession is under. SWU continues to campaign and lobby government to address this and to create a sustainable workforce. John keeps members informed of the challenges we face because of our [exclusion from collective bargaining](#) which means that SWU is not legally able to ballot members about industrial action.

## Media representation

SWU, together with the Independent Press Standards Ombudsman (IPSO), has created a [reporting process for unjust reporting about social workers](#). This is rudimentary progress to recognise and protect social workers in line with public service peers. Social workers can submit links or images of media reports for investigation to [campaigns@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@swu-union.org.uk).

SWU continues to work with the Campaign Collective who have supported SWU members to run 11 successful national campaigns such as part-time workers, recognition of neurodiversity, and student bursaries. We have the resource to develop one more campaign this year.

**We heartily encourage SWU/SASW members to submit their campaign ideas through the SWU Campaign Fund: <https://swu-union.org.uk/swu-campaign-fund>**

## What can social workers do now?

Activism can be potent in many forms. There are alternatives to striking. For example, you might choose to work to the terms of your contract. You are entitled to stop to take your lunch. Take regular breaks. Limit the number of visits, meetings and appointments you can realistically undertake each day. Finish at the time you are meant to. Do not take work home.

When you cannot finish a pressing task or meet a legal requirement escalate this to your responsible line manager as soon as this becomes apparent. Outline the reasons why. Record your working times thoroughly and accurately. Being able to evidence what you can and cannot reasonably do is true accountability demonstrating understanding and responsibility for the decisions you make, knowing why you make them and calculating the impact those decisions might have. It also gives your managers evidence about what their services can realistically deliver with the resource currently allocated.

SWU and SASW will work with our members and colleagues in professional bodies, other unions, and affiliates to accomplish sustainable changes which go beyond pay and help create a working environment that not only is effective in supporting our citizens, but offers a healthy and sustainable career.

## References

1. Compass Jobs Fair, March 2023, paper to follow in summer 2023
2. Henry Hepburn. *Scottish teachers' pay offer officially accepted* (Tes Magazine, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023)
3. Severin Carrell. *Health unions call off strike action in Scotland after new pay offer* (The Guardian, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022)
4. Junior doctors in Scotland offered 14.5% pay rise - BBC News (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-65670192>)
5. Jordan Pettitt. *Nurses to ballot for more strikes as Government imposes pay deal* (Independent, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023)

## Book Review

### The Loss and Grief Practice Manual

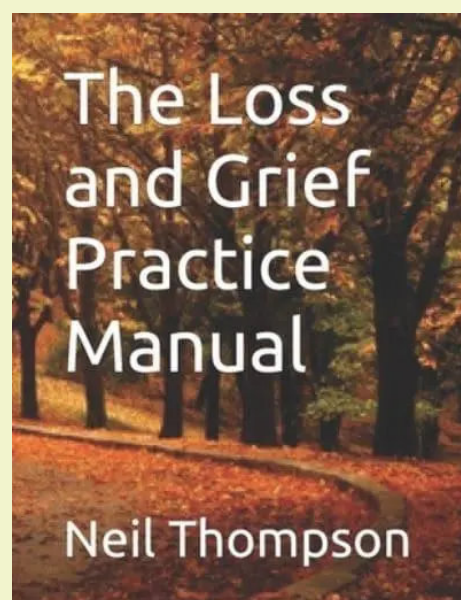
Dr Neil Thompson

#### Reviewed by:

Dave Callow, Senior Lecturer in Social Work,  
University of Lincoln

Dr Neil Thompson once again takes the complicated issues we face as professionals and breaks them down into the accessible. This manual is a guide for the universal context of “loss and grief” that can be returned to again and again to further enhance a professional’s knowledge of what the author refers to as an “inevitable feature of human experience”. The sensitivity of the language employed in this book is embedded throughout and particularly evident in the ‘voices of experience’ accounts which in turn invites anyone with an interest in loss and grief to develop their knowledge or find comfort and understanding in the words and points made.

The ‘practice focus’ sections serve to encourage further consideration and reflection for professionals while ‘exercise’ activities ask the fundamental questions that explore and unpick our understanding of loss and grief and how we may respond in practice. As you would expect from Neil, he has considered the holistic impact of loss and grief upon the individual with exploration of the environmental, physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural as well as the spiritual reactions that anyone may experience at any point in their lives. This book is a tool for professionals and any professional equipped with this manual is better placed to respond to the impact of loss and grief.



<https://neilthompson.info/product/the-loss-and-grief-practice-manual/>



## Review promised into social work student bursaries

Social work students in Scotland have secured a major step forward in their campaign for bursaries in the final years of their studies

In a letter to campaigners from the new Minister for Further & Higher Education, **Graeme Dey MSP**, the Scottish Government has said reviews are taking place on options to improve student financing for those who undertake work placements.

The move comes after a powerful [cross-party committee of MSPs agreed to take action](#) to support the need for social work university students to be provided with bursaries during the final years of their courses in Scotland, where they work unpaid on the front-line working with vulnerable people.

The Scottish Parliament Petitions Committee considered the campaign after more than 2,000 people signed the call for bursaries for all third and fourth year undergraduate social work students in Scotland - as well as reform of post-graduate bursary funding.

Social work students, backed by the Social Workers Union (SWU) and Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW), argue that this would ensure equality with other students who work in the public sector in front-line roles during their studies.

Currently, the total for nursing, midwifery and paramedic bursaries is a non-repayable £37,500, but for social work students [the basic support available](#) is between £20,400 and £32,400, mostly in the form of a repayable loan and depending on household income.

### New and ongoing reviews

The Minister's reply to students states that the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has commissioned a review of practice learning finance,

which will report in August 2023 and Scottish Government officials are *“working with sector partners to explore options for improvements to postgraduate bursaries. There is also work planned covering practice learning and an options appraisal for improving routes into social work.”*

*The reply goes on to state that “the SSSC are also working with relevant universities and the Social Work Education Partnership (SWEPP) to explore additional funding models across social work education more widely, working with social work universities to consider collectively how social work students can be supported through the current pressures faced.”*

Additionally, Scottish Government Higher Education officials are undertaking a Review of Postgraduate study. This review is ongoing, with initial outputs announced for the 2023/24 Academic Year in March 2023.

**Lucy Challoner**, one of the leaders of the student campaign, commented: *“This is a major step forward and we thank the Scottish Government for listening to the strength of feeling on this issue. We look forward to speaking with the Minister when the reviews are complete to ensure we have a fair way forward for social work students.”*

**John McGowan**, General Secretary of the Social Workers Union, commented: *“We understand the financial pressures the Scottish Government is facing, but the students' campaign is about two basic principles, that people should be fairly compensated for doing front-line work in the public sector and that students on social work courses should be treated like their peers on nursing and paramedic degrees and receive bursaries while on placements.”*

paramedics). Extensive support was provided to the students through the Fund to enable them to work towards increased funding for social work students. This has resulted in several bursts of media coverage in the Scottish press as well as a meeting with the former Minister for Higher Education. After initial Government responses were not deemed adequate by the campaigners, a petition to the Scottish Parliament was launched which generated over 2,000 signatures. A powerful cross-party committee of MSPs is now investigating the issue. A new letter was sent to the new Minister who has in recent days confirmed that the Scottish Government is now actively considering plans for enhanced student support for social work students. Activity will continue over the months ahead to keep the pressure on and ensure change is delivered.

**English students** have also identified issues with their bursary schemes and activity is underway to support them. Written Parliamentary questions were secured by Emma Lewell-Buck MP to tease out Government thinking and provide background information for the campaign. A letter has been sent to Labour front bench MPs asking for social work bursary improvement to be official party policy and collaboration with the Labour Social Work Group is seeking to secure amendments to the National Policy Framework document through local branches. An open letter to English Ministers responsible for the policy has been signed by over 300 social work students and this will be sent, with supporting media activity, in the coming months.

**Educational psychologists** worked with social workers to bring a motion to the GFTU AGM to warn of the damaging long-term impacts of the cost of living crisis on young people. A news story to support this motion was drafted with coverage appearing in education and social work media.

**Northern Irish** social workers will also be supported by the

Campaign Fund going forward with initial meetings having taken place to outline possible campaign themes, such as the underfunding of student bursaries.

**Training** will also take place for social workers who wish to get more involved in campaigns. Media training is taking place on 11<sup>th</sup> July and again in the autumn. A campaign workshop will be held at the end of September.

## Previous activity delivered through the campaign fund

**Food Is Care** campaign launch was supported with research and a news story to launch the campaign, with coverage appearing in Social Work Today, Morning Star, The Rooftop and on GB News.

**Welsh Student Bursaries** campaigners were supported with public affairs advice to improve their correspondence to Welsh ministers, helping to secure improved student support.

**Emergency support** was provided to the Social Workers' Union officials to help deal with the media response to the Arthur Labinjo-Hughes case.



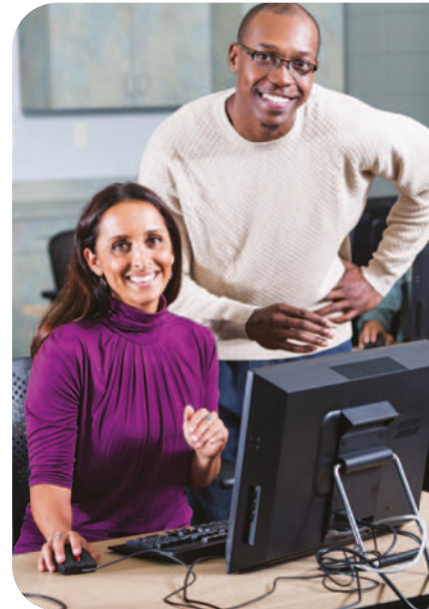
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- campaigns to change legislation bills.
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- funds the Austerity Action Group and opportunities to get involved.

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- Monthly Newsletter

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